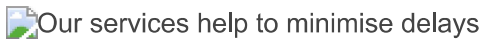
Airport-Collaborative Decision Making



14 February 2012 - The Met Office has brought together airport operators, airlines and regulators to discuss the challenges involved in establishing Europe-wide Airport-Collaborative Decision Making.

The event provided a useful debating forum which highlighted the key issues involved in implementing Airport-Collaborative Decision Making (A-CDM), and considered potential practical solutions to help move things forward.

It was widely understood that a collaborative approach was the key to making any airport more resilient. By actively engaging all the agents that operate out of it as well as sharing information from third parties, like the Met Office and the Metropolitan Police, a common situational awareness could be achieved, particularly in times of crisis.

So when the weather takes a turn for the worse, A-CDM could allow Airlines, ground handlers, NATS and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to share up to date information and convey consistent information out to passengers and the media.

A-CDM could have real benefits in terms of safety, efficiency and cost savings across the aviation industry. But airports agreed that they would have to see compelling cost analyses and demonstrable benefits of A-CDM before adopting it.

To improve resilience, the group acknowledged that they had to stay one step ahead of the weather. Heathrow, for example, has Met Office forecasters working out of the air traffic control (ATC) tower and benefited from having around the clock advice on the ever-changing conditions.

While snow, ice, fog, strong winds and wind shear all had impacts on the ground, thunderstorms were the biggest meteorological threat to aircraft in flight, so much so that pilots were often unwilling to take-off when a weather front passed over the airport. A-CDM could allow operations teams to see the information used by ATC and pilots and perhaps, agree thresholds for aircraft dispatch.

Forecast accuracy is improving all the time and new technology used by the Met Office means that ensemble modelling and probabilistic forecasts are now possible which provide greater confidence in certain weather occurring allowing users to more effectively manage risk-based decisions thereby increasingly helping to reduce the negative impacts of adverse conditions.

Looking to the future many airports are now factoring climate change advice from the Met Office into their longer term strategic plans ensuring that they have an appropriate awareness of severe weather that might occur more often in the UK and other parts of the world for which the aviation industry needed to be prepared.

The Met Office has a long history and tradition of specialist knowledge and experience of the aviation industry and works very closely with the industry to make decisions together.

We continue to demonstrate how we can benefit the industry in many new ways such as our innovative approach to tackling major issues, and with our wide collaborations such as our role in the Natural Hazard Partnership being a recent example of our integrated approach to providing the best possible advice and guidance to Government and industry.

Arwel Griffiths, Business Development Director at the Met Office said: "We were delighted with the attendance and contribution from the delegates at our aviation focussed workshop and the positive feedback after the event was a real endorsement of the timeliness and usefulness of the discussion. The debate was also a clear indication that A-CDM is high on the industry agenda and that there is a real appetite to engage with the challenges of implementation."

Contact information

Met Office Press Office: **+44 (0)1392 886655**

E-mail: Press Office

Met Office Customer Centre: **01392 885680**

If you're outside the UK: **+44 1392 885680**

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